

RESEÑAS

CRÍTICA Y ENSAYO

Sharon G. Feldman. *Allegories of Dissent. The Theater of Agustín Gómez-Arcos*. Lewisburg, PA, Bucknell UP, 1998, 303 pp.

Effortlessly integrating the application of theory, critical acumen and textual analysis, Sharon Feldman has written an engaging book-length study of the theater of Agustín Gómez-Arcos. In her «Preface», the author states modestly that her hope is «that the present study will serve to uncover the work of yet another playwright from the postwar period and thereby contribute to the process of recuperation and reconsideration» of post Civil War Spanish theater in general (14). I am happy to report that Feldman accomplishes her primary objective, and much more, with considerable aplomb.

Feldman grounds her study of Gómez-Arcos's theater on the following: that Gómez-Arcos's dramatic production is inextricably linked to the social and political tenor of Francoist Spain, that the protest of oppressive tactics of authoritarian society constitutes the common narrative thread of the Spanish playwright's dramaturgy, and that the conflict between what reality appears to be and what it actually is provides the basis for dramatic tension in his work. Freedom, as Feldman notes, whether social, psychological, or artistic is the overriding theme. According to Feldman, Gómez-Arcos realizes his social critique by combining a variety of artistic means. Among these, the most important are post-modern allegory, which Gómez-Arcos uses primarily to explore the authoritative or political nature of representation; the motif of sacrificial ritual, which serves as a mechanism for the playwright to convey metaphorically the inherently violent nature of the human condition; the interplay of historical past and present which provides a revisionist perspective that allows for a critique of the paradoxical nature of reality; and absurdism and Brechtian alienation used by Gómez-Arcos to condition his spectators readers and lead them to a more social conscious or critical perspective of their own immediate surroundings. Summarily speaking, Feldman's study illustrates how the theater of Gómez-Arcos is fueled by a personal and professional moral responsibility to produce works identified by the resolute objective to provoke an awareness of the

oppressive social and political underpinnings of authoritarian societies that promote a disparaging sense of humanity.

The «Introduction» is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is a detailed biobibliographical account of Gómez-Arcos's literary production (both theater and novel). The second presents us with the overarching theoretical framework in which Feldman analyzes Gómez-Arcos's theater, that of allegory. Using seven of Gómez-Arcos's most important plays, reviews and information about the performances of each of the plays, Feldman presents us with a wide range of vivid dramatic images that both individually and collectively reflect the effects that censorship and exile had on the playwright's artistic expression. *Diálogos de la herejía* and *Los gatos* are analyzed in Chapters Three and Four (Part I), respectively. Chapters Five and Six (Part II) focus on *Mil y un mesías* and *Queridos míos, es preciso contaros ciertas cosas*, respectively. In these four plays which were written before Gómez-Arcos's period of exile in Paris that began in 1968, Feldman illustrates how the transgressive use of violence and the absurd in the playwright with the necessary theoretical base for creating an allegory that combats the oppressive state of the human condition of Francoist Spain. In Parts III (Chapters Seven and Eight) and IV (Chapter 9), Feldman turns her attention to the three plays written after the playwright's exile in Paris. Chapter Seven focuses on *Adorado Alberto*, Chapter Eight on *Pre-Papá*. Chapter Nine deals with *Interview de Mrs. Muerta Smith por sus fantasmas*, without a doubt one of Gómez-Arcos's more iconoclastic plays. Here the theme of freedom persists, though contextualized by the playwright's own condition of exile and preoccupation with national identity. Although Gómez-Arcos's tone is somewhat more optimistic in the plays of this period, according to Feldman, his exile condition results in a more openly invective brand of theater, one that is more radical in its non-conformist expression. The study closes with a brief «Epilogue» and two appendices. The first appendix is a listing of performances and premieres of plays by Gómez-Arcos's, the second is an interview with the playwright, conducted in Spanish and translated into English, that dates 1990. A bibliography of Gómez-Arcos's work and studies about his works follow.

Feldman's study is first and foremost a study of the ideologically and socio-historically paradigmatic context and content of censorship and exile in the theater of Agustín Gómez-Arcos. The study systematically evolves to present us with a reading of the theater of Gómez-Arcos that transcends the socio-political consequences of censorship and exile to broach its aesthetic implications. Noteworthy in this regard are the less traditional theoretical studies that Feldman employs to bring us to a more universal understanding of Gómez-Arcos's work. In using post-modern theory, Girardian theories of the sacrifice and ritual violence, the theater of the absurd and Brechtian dramatic theory, Feldman provides us with an example of how we can gain greater insight into a tradition-

ally obscure period of Spanish cultural expression through the efforts of a single literary figure. Consequently while very specifically a study of the theater of Gómez-Arcos, what Feldman ultimately provides us with is a means to reassess post Civil War Spanish theater in general.

The College of Wooster

JOHN P. GABRIELE

Carlos A. Rabassó y Francisco Javier Rabassó. *Granada-Nueva York-La Habana. Federico García Lorca entre el flamenco, el jazz y el afrocubanismo*. Madrid, Libertarias, 1998, 499 pp.

El año de 1998 se cumplió el centenario del nacimiento de García Lorca y este hecho fue motivo de la celebración de multitud de acontecimientos, certámenes musicales, exposiciones, representaciones teatrales y, cómo no, de la publicación de numerosos libros que pretendieron acercarnos, a veces hasta los límites de la exasperación, la vida y la obra del escritor de Fuentevaqueros. El libro que me ocupa supone, desde luego, una aproximación singular a la figura del poeta a través de la tonalidad musical que su obra contiene con un especial acento en ese fascinante mundo tan de moda, para su suerte y desgracia, que es el flamenco.

Fue Enrique Morente el que una vez dijo que Miles Davis había compuesto la mejor saeta de toda la historia de la música gitanoandaluza. Esta afirmación resume el espíritu de este trabajo bien documentado donde se intentan descubrir las corrientes subterráneas que comunican estilos musicales y formas de poseía afectados sensiblemente por los fenómenos de transculturación y que constituyen uno de los hilos conductores fundamentales en el análisis de la poesía lorquiana. El ensayo se articula también a modo de itinerario por aquellas ciudades donde Lorca encontró una sustancia poética de envergadura para la creación de sus libros: Granada, Nueva York y La Habana. Paralelamente, los hermanos Rabassó indagan en la constitución de las culturas que dan cobijo a estas ciudades a través de sus genuinas identidades musicales (el flamenco, el jazz, y el afrocubanismo), al tiempo que escogen para un análisis comparativo dos poetas que mantuvieron una estrecha relación con Lorca: Langston Hughes y Nicolás Guillén. Por lo pronto, los lectores de lengua castellana necesitaban urgentemente la presentación, siquiera superficial, de la obra del poeta norteamericano, autor muy desconocido en el ámbito de nuestra cultura.

La propuesta es interesante desde el momento en que los escritores del libro tratan de establecer paralelismo y divergencia entre las formas musicales anteriormente aludidas y los libros objeto de análisis: *Poema del cante jondo* y *Poeta en Nueva York* de Lorca, *The Weary Blues* de